



**FOR THE FAITH** — As religious liberty leaders in America call for action to support persecuted Christians around the world, Isaac Gbadero, president of the student body at the Baptist seminary in Kaduna, Nigeria, surveys the aftermath of an attack several years ago that destroyed the seminary campus and took the lives of 11 people, including two students and a retired maintenance man. (BP photo)

## Persecuted for their faith

**Support for beleaguered Christians needs to be stepped up, leaders say**

**WASHINGTON (BP and local reports)** — The United States must make the fight against persecution a priority, religious liberty advocates said recently.

"As the Apostle Paul taught the early church to respond to the needs of fellow believers who were being persecuted in Jerusalem, we here in America today have a responsibility to use

our influence and our resources to help fellow Christians in need," said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council (FRC) in Washington, D.C.

Tony Perkins, who is not related to William Perkins, editor of The Baptist Record, joined five other religious freedom advocates in a webcast on persecution cosponsored by FRC and Voice of the Martyrs (VOM). As host of the webcast, he discussed the persecution of Christians in countries throughout the Middle East, as well as in North Korea, Eritrea, China,

see SUPPORT on p. 10

## Pakistani court frees accused teen

**ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (BP)** — In a court decision that even a Muslim cleric called a "milestone in the history of Pakistan," the blasphemy case against a Pakistani Christian girl has been dismissed for lack of evidence.

In his judgment on Nov. 20, the justice who heads the Islamabad High Court urged extreme caution in matters related to blasphemy and criticized the practice of fake blasphemy accusations against non-Muslims, according to The New York Times.

Rimsha Masih, reportedly an impoverished 14-year-old with Down Syndrome, was arrested in August near Islamabad after neighbors accused her of burning an Islamic textbook. In theory, she could have faced execution.

The accusations led to an international outcry that renewed focus on Pakistan's controversial blasphemy law, The Times said.

Though the law enjoys widespread support among Pakistanis, critics say it is abused by people involved in disputes or against members of religious minorities, Reuters reported.

A police investigation revealed that a local cleric had framed Masih by adding pages of the Quran to a heap of burned textbook pages that were found in a bag she was carrying, The Times said. The cleric was arrested and then released on bail.

The fact that no one had seen Masih burning pages of the textbook used to teach the Quran to children was central to the judge's

see FREE on p. 11

"This is the first case of its kind when a person charged under the strict blasphemy laws is exonerated from the accusation. This case has also brought for the first time a debate on how these laws are misused to target innocent people."

**Tahir Naveed Chaudhry**

**Chairman of the All Pakistan Ulama Council**

## Federal appeals court announces temporary injunction of mandate

**ST. LOUIS (BP and local reports)** — A federal appeals court has issued another temporary injunction against the Obama administration's abortion/contraceptive mandate.

The one-page order on Nov. 28 from a three-judge panel at the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis prevents the government from forcing a Missouri business, O'Brien Industrial Holdings LLC, to cover contraceptives and abortion-causing drugs in its employee health care plans as the appeals process is completed.

The panel's temporary injunction came two months after a lower court tossed out O'Brien's lawsuit, and marks the fourth time this year that a federal court has issued an order or ruling against the mandate, which applies to businesses and religious organizations.

There are about 40 cases nationwide seeking to overturn the mandate, which was implemented by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services after President Obama signed the landmark health care bill into law.

The lawsuit by the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) says the mandate would force Frank O'Brien, the business owner, to violate his "religious beliefs and company policy." The mandate violates two federal laws as well as the First Amendment guarantee of religious freedom and free speech, the suit states.

If the court does not intervene beyond the temporary injunction stage and O'Brien refuses to follow the mandate, he would face steep fines. O'Brien's company and its subsidiaries employ about 85 people.

O'Brien is a Catholic who has the religious duty to conduct himself and his business in a manner consistent with the Catholic faith," ACLJ stated in an appeal to the Eighth Circuit. "Pursuant to these beliefs, O'Brien has established as company policy that cannot pay for and provide coverage for contraceptives, sterilization, abortion, or related educa-

tion and counseling."

O'Brien's business operates a number of businesses that explore, mine, and process refractory and ceramic raw materials, according to ACLJ.

"The order sends a message that the religious beliefs of employers must be respected by the government," said ACLJ attorney Francis Manion. "We have argued from the beginning that employers like Frank O'Brien must be able to operate their business in a manner consistent with their moral values, not the values of the government."

"We look forward to this case moving forward and securing the constitutional rights of our client."

The three-judge panel, all appointees of Republican presidents, split 2-1 on the order. The two justices in the majority were Raymond W. Gruender and Bobby E. Shepherd, each nominated by George W. Bush. Dissenting in the order was Morris Shephard Arnold, who was nominated by George H.W. Bush.

The ACLJ suit involves a private business, but many of the 40 suits against the mandate involve religious organizations.

### Inside

Director

Sunday

Lessons

Editorial

Bibliography

How to

a Christian

Letters to

Editor

Just for the Record

Classifieds

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012

DEC 21 2012



## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### More gambling pie in the sky

With much fanfare, the final of two winners in the nearly \$600,000,000 Powerball lottery went before the cameras recently to receive his share of the seasonal prize. The citizens of our fair republic would have to be living in a cave without piped-in cable TV to be unaware of the big contest and its gigantic purse.

Americans in 42 states (not including Mississippi) lined up for hours for their infinitesimal chance to join the country's financial elite. The difficulty of exactly picking five random numbers out of 59 possible numbers — and then selecting a sixth, separate number out of a total of 39 possible numbers — would boggle the calculations of even the most nimble-minded amateur mathematician.

Not to worry, though. The billions left over for governments to divvy up after the winners are paid goes to good causes like early childhood education, health care for the needy, college scholarships for the deserving, preservation of natural resources, and other worthy endeavors, doesn't it? Read on.

John Schoen recently wrote about the Powerball lottery on the business page of *nbcnews.com*. "About 60 cents (of every dollar waged) goes to the winner. Some goes to run the lottery. A piece of it goes to a private, Italian-based conglomerate that operates lotteries and slot machines in 50 countries around the world.

"Depending on what state you live in, that leaves as little as 11 cents to pay for the government services these games were created to help."

"It's a regressive tax," Lucy Dadayan, senior policy analyst at the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government at the State University of New York in Albany, told Schoen, "and any time a government relies on a regressive tax it is not the best policy option, but it's easier for state officials to promote gambling rather than to increase income or sales taxes."

The last part of Dadayan's

observation is certainly true in Mississippi. State Representative Alyce Clarke, a Democrat from Jackson, has been pushing a lottery for at least ten years. "It's better to keep the money here," Clarke said on *lotterypost.com*, in 2004. "In my opinion, if we had a lottery, we wouldn't have all the (state) budget problems we have," Clarke told *Associated Press* in 2010.

Another pro-lottery legislator, State Representative John Mayo, a Democrat from Clarksdale, argued in *The Commercial Appeal* in 2010, "Mississippi has got to start talking about this."

Mississippi has been talking about lotteries, and the answer has been a resounding "NO." What part of that do so many of our elected officials not understand?

"When their situation becomes more desperate because of the economy, you get some folks playing the lottery precisely because their situation is more desperate, and this is the only route they see to escaping the situation that they're in," Patrick Pierce, a political scientist and author of *Gambling Politics: State Government and the Business of Betting*, told Schoen in the *nbcnews.com* article.

In a state as poor as Mississippi, that logic inarguably applies.

Remember when we were promised by our politicians that legalized alcohol would be the end of all of our state government's financial problems? Remember when we were promised by our politicians that legalized casinos would provide a cash stream that would never dry up? We are now being promised the same pie-in-the-sky about lotteries.

It remains to be seen whether the state's citizens will once again fall for the same empty promises. When the Mississippi Legislature convenes for its 2013 session in early January, the pro-lottery lobbyists will be among the first through the door of the State Capital. They'll be ready. Will we?

## Hiding in the cleft of the rock

What would you do if you had to choose between your life and your baby's life? I never really thought I would have to choose. Since college it was always just a hypothetical question to me. Up to that point in my life, I had even heard most pro-life supporters affirm that abortion is always wrong — with the exception of the mother's life being in jeopardy. That exception had always troubled me. In college I decided that if I ever had to choose, I'd go with the baby and trust God. I never thought I'd actually have to make that choice.

Fast forward four years and 25 weeks. The dark ultrasound room was quiet. My ultra-normal, 25-week pregnancy was falling to pieces before my eyes. When the doctor finally broke the silence, "Katie, we're concerned about your baby," my heart was crushed. My doctor explained that our sweet daughter's body was badly deformed. Our daughter had no left arm. She had no right leg. Her left leg was badly clubbed and her right arm seemed atrophied. The doctor feared Eve's brain and organs could not sustain her outside the womb.

Instantly, my heart encountered shock, terror, and sorrow like I have never known. They allowed my husband and me to have a moment alone to absorb the news before meeting privately with our doctor to discuss our options.

My heart sunk further as I listened to the doctor's medical opinion. She never said the word abortion, but the suggestion had been made perfectly clear. It was posed with such delicate phrases: "My concern is to keep Katie as safe as possible. ... We need to think about what a delivery could mean for Katie." I could hardly listen. I was consumed with begging God to spare my daughter. Was my doctor really telling me my daughter wasn't worth saving?

As soon as I realized her suggestion, I remembered that I had made this choice long ago. Suddenly, amidst my sorrow, I knew that God had been preparing me for this moment, in this doctor's office, for years. I suddenly found myself thankful as I unhesitatingly responded, "I want to save my daughter."



Guest opinion  
with Katie Fruge

My choice didn't make the coming days easier. I had limitless questions of every possible why and how. I wasn't mad at God, but I was frustrated. I felt like David when he cried out to God, begging Him to come in and make sense of the mess. I experienced pain that is too deep for words. I know I am not the first, or unfortunately, the last woman to experience sorrow of this nature. It comes in all different shapes and sizes, but ultimately has the same root issue: the effects of sin had corrupted something that was supposed to be beautiful.

I received a lot of different advice and words of wisdom from many women during those days, some good advice, some not so good. As I went through my own struggles, I couldn't help but realize that there were certain truths that applied not only to me, but to every woman who has experienced the pain of something beautiful being affected by a fallen world:

**I learned that I needed to allow grief.** Too often, when Christian women hear of a crisis in someone's life they actually ignore that it's a crisis and essentially discourage grieving. It's well meaning, but unbiblical (Romans 12:15).

Cry out to God, not to undermine or question His Sovereignty, but in order to understand His will. It's okay to be honest if you don't understand what He's doing. My daughter's tragedy incapacitated me. No one was counseling me just to cry and grieve, but that's all I could do — cry out to the Lord (Romans 8:26). My intense grief and groanings for my daughter brought me to the deepest connection I've ever had with God. This newfound intimacy enabled me to be able to trust Him

see FRUGE on p. 10

## THE Baptist Record

Editor  
William H. Perkins Jr.  
wperkins@mbcb.org

Associate Editor  
Tony Martin  
tmartin@mbcb.org

Layout/Design  
Megan Young  
myoung@mbcb.org

Advertising  
Emily Jones  
ejones@mbcb.org

Circulation Manager  
Brenda Quattlebaum  
bquattlebaum@mbcb.org

Editor Emeritus  
Don McGregor

Baptist Record  
Advisory Committee:  
Dwayne Parker, Flora  
Paul Sims, Pontotoc  
Barry Burris, Terry  
Carl White, Meridian  
Billie Buckley, Petal  
Russell Mord, Sturgis

Postmaster:  
Send changes of  
address to: The Baptist  
Record, P.O. Box 530,  
Jackson, MS  
39205-0530.

Send news,  
communication,  
and address changes  
to: The Editor, Baptist  
Record, P.O. Box 530,  
Jackson, MS  
39205-0530.

Tel: (601) 968-3800  
Fax: (601) 292-3330  
E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org



BAPTISTS

VOLUME 136 • NUMBER 49 • ISSN-0005-5778

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$10.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.



# Ruling means chaplains' lawsuit against Navy still alive

**WASHINGTON (BP)** — Sixty-five chaplains alleging evangelicals have been discriminated against by the U.S. Navy are moving closer to a preliminary injunction in their case, even though many of them are now nearing retirement age.

In early November, the District of Columbia U.S. Court of Appeals overruled a lower court's denial last January of the chaplains' injunction request. The plaintiffs had hoped the injunction would delay promotion board hearings until their motion challenging the constitutionality of the Navy's chaplain promotion procedures could be argued in court.

The appeals court ruling returned the case to a lower court for further action, with both sides to submit summaries of their pleadings and exhibits to federal District Court Judge Gladys Kessler by mid-December. Kessler, an appointee of U.S. President Bill Clinton, was assigned to the cases last April.

The evangelical chaplains contend the Navy's chaplain promotion process allows and encourages denominational discrimination and has favored mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics.

"We believe our statistics show discrimination and favoritism in the process the Navy has used," said Tom Rush, pastor of Berea Church in Social Circle, Ga. "I'm pleased that we finally have a chance to tell our side of the story."

Originating with a single lawsuit in late 1999, over the next seven years evangelicals from numerous denominations filed additional suits. The cases that weren't settled or otherwise re-

solved later were consolidated into one class action.

Art Schulz, an attorney in Vienna, Va., hopes the ruling finally will move his clients closer to an injunction and then a trial. "My hope is the court will look at our data and come to the conclusion that this system with its secret procedures allows all kinds of bias to enter into decisions," said Schulz, a retired Army officer.

"We're looking for a level playing field, where promotions are based on how effective a chaplain's ministry is and how he's done in the field. It's not that way now."

The ruling does allow the plaintiffs to again press for a delay in the next promotion board meetings, tentatively scheduled for February.

While the U.S. Department of Justice has a policy against commenting on pending litigation, it has denied that the Navy engages in discrimination. "With respect to the denominational preference theory, the Navy asserts that there is no factual basis for [plaintiffs'] claims that Navy chaplain promotion boards had discriminated against plaintiffs or would likely do so in the future," said a brief cited in the most recent ruling.

"Relying on its own statistical expert, the Navy challenges the methodology employed by plaintiffs' ex-

pert and asserts that its 'own evidence establish[es] the absence of any religious discrimination by the promotion boards.'"

In their ruling, the appeals judges said the district court made no factual findings to resolve the competing claims between the two sides. Schulz said that is a primary reason it returned the case to district court.

The evidence the evangelicals have submitted includes a pair of analyses by statistician Harald Leuba, who said discrimination in the corps includes a pattern of candidates securing promotions more often when they come from the same denomination as the chief of chaplains.

**Art Schulz  
attorney**

"There is a now a 40-year long statistical record of preference for denominations which have had a member rise to chief of chaplains," Leuba said in his most recent court statement, "to the permanent and long standing disadvantage of all the chaplains who have never had one of their members rise to that level of influence."

The plaintiffs include 16 Southern Baptists. Some, like Rush, say winning on a matter of principle is the primary issue since they don't plan to return to active duty. Two years after leaving active duty in 1994, the Georgia pastor enlisted in the Air Force Reserves and secured two promotions before he re-

tired from that branch of the military in 2005.

"There are some [plaintiffs] who may have the opportunity to be promoted and serve, but what we're looking for is the Navy to do the right thing," said Rush, a member of the Georgia Baptist Convention's Executive Committee. "That is, change the system so that promotions for the chaplain corps are in the same way as promotions for all officers."

Greg DeMarco, who retired in September as pastor of Fincastle Church in Waxhaw, N.C., said he would like to see the line officers have more input. "I have no thoughts of going back into the military. The fight has been going on so long that most of the guys are nearing retirement age. This is 15 years for me, and the fight was going five or six years before that."

Jim Weibling, who left active duty in 1994 and continued in the Naval Reserves until 2005, said the contested policies allow discrimination not only by denomination but also by race and gender.

"To our disappointment, rather than change the contested policies, the Navy has worked to enact legislation that disallows public disclosure of illegal acts by board members and allows the discriminatory behavior to continue," Weibling said.

A pastor for many years after leaving active duty, Weibling now works in property development in the Houston area. He said chaplains as well as all others who serve their country should be graded on performance.

**"We're looking for a level playing field, where promotions are based on how effective a chaplain's ministry is and how he's done in the field. It's not that way now."**

## First Hindu to take office when U.S. Congress reconvenes

**NASHVILLE (BP and local reports)** — As the U.S. Congress becomes increasingly diverse, a new House of Representatives member will become the first Hindu to serve — and the first to use the sacred Hindu text, the Bhagavad Gita, at her swearing-in ceremony next month.

Tulsi Gabbard will represent Hawaii's second congressional district. Come January, just over 42% of the House, or 184 members, will be non-Protestant, according to the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life. Protestants will comprise 57.2%, or 246 members of the House.

Other members in addition to Gabbard will be 134 Catholics, 22 Jewish representatives, eight Mormons, five Orthodox Christians, two Buddhists, two Muslims, eight whose religion is unspecified, one religiously unaffiliated, and one Unitarian Universalist.

Mississippi's House members include two Southern Baptists, Republicans Alan Nunnelee (First District) and Gregg Harper (Third District); a United Methodist, Democrat Bennie Thompson (Sec-

Come January, just over 42% of the House, or 184 members, will be non-Protestant, according to the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life. Protestants will comprise 57.2%, or 246 members of the House.

ond District); and a Catholic, Republican Steven Palazzo (Fourth District).

Anju Bhargava, founder of Hindu American Seva Charities, told The Huffington Post that Gabbard's use of the text, also called the Gita, is symbolic of the growing religious diversity in Congress.

"For Hindu Americans it is a historic moment... It is a matter of pride that finally someone not only from our own faith, but someone who is a practicing Hindu, will be sworn in the Congress on one of the most sacred books," Bhargava said, according to The Post.

"It is my hope that this swearing-in will be another learning opportunity for our country about Hindus and Gita, another step towards bringing knowledge and values of Gita even more prominently to the American political land-

scape so that it becomes part of the everyday vocabulary in applying the moral principles in our political arena," Bhargava said.

Gabbard has described the Bhagavad Gita, one of several Hindu texts, as her favorite, pointing out verses from chapter two defining the soul as pervading the entire body, indestructible and imperishable, and saying it cannot be "cut into pieces by any weapon, burned by fire, moistened by water nor withered by the wind."

Gabbard replaces Mazie Hirono, a Buddhist who left her House seat in a successful run for the U.S. Senate. Hirono will be the only Buddhist in the U.S. Senate, which will include 53 Protestants, 27 Catholics, 10 Jewish officials, seven Mormons, and two whose religion is unspecified, according to Pew.



U.S. Capitol

It has become a fascinating pop culture exercise to express ideas in a simple and minimal number of words. For instance, there have been times when people were challenged to make a video expressing their love in three words for something like a sport's team or a relationship in just a few words. Recently, there was an explosion of participation when people on a radio program were challenged to express racism in six words. An avalanche of words, sometimes good, sometimes bad, but nearly always thought provoking, took place. As I walked through and processed my thoughts about Christmas again, I wanted to ask you to join with me in putting your feelings, your views, your difficulties, or your celebrations about Christmas in just four words.

As I thought about Christmas in the biblical sense, Christmas past, and Christmas present, both its meaning and its blessings began to take shape about *Christmas in Four Words*, and I made a list just for me.

- Jesus, God in flesh
- Christmas, God year around
- Jesus, God with us
- Christmas, heaven on earth
- Jesus, shepherds, Magi, me
- Immanuel, gold, frankincense, myrrh



## Christmas in Four Words

■ Jesus, God, glory, gift  
 ■ Jesus, Lord, Savior, Word  
 I will not share with you my long list, but you get the idea. I would be interested in hearing yours. You may have only one that you want to send me, or you may sit for minutes or hours thinking about the magnificence of Jesus. As the Lord Himself ignites your heart, it will be an explosion of thoughts and inspiration. You may want to continue putting together *Christmas in Four Words*. You can sit down, put pen to paper, and send them to Jim Futral, Mississippi Baptist Con-

vention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530, or you can use email and send them almost instantaneously to [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org). I would love to hear from you.

Just give God an opportunity to invade your time, inspire your heart, and enlarge your imagination to think about *Christmas in Four Words*. Of course, I may not receive all of these until Christmas has come and gone which may push me back to sharing many of them with you next year. On the other hand, Jesus is always in season, Christmas is always inspir-

ing to us, and I may just share them with you as the New Year begins. I am convinced of this, that the wonder and majesty of our glorious Savior will grow immensely in the depth of importance as we spend time thinking about His grandeur in four words. If by chance you have small children or grandchildren, include them and encourage them to explain what Christmas means to them in four words. I would love to have those creative thoughts also and let me know that they came from them. Jesus is the indescribable gift, and He is without boundaries. As you think about Him, write it down, and let's celebrate together.

Another fact that comes to my heart as I lace together four words at a time is how meaningful and absolutely filled with such gigantic truth is just one, two, three, or four words. As I processed my thoughts about Christmas, I realized that while it was glorious, earthshaking, life changing, and heaven exalting it is still fresh, alive, meaningful, and blessing hearts until this day. So for all of you as you approach this Christmas, I give you four last words — *friends, family, food, faith*. Merry Christmas and may God bless you!

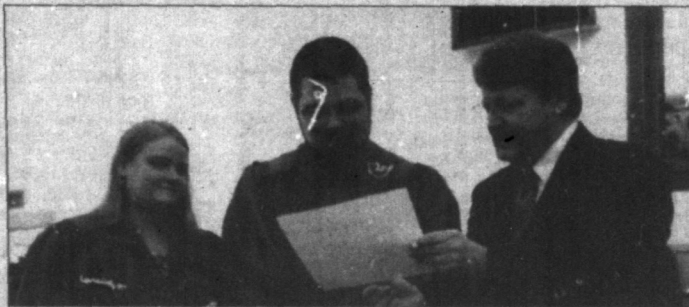
The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org).

## Just for the Record



**SHADY GROVE CHURCH, LUCEDALE,** ordained Jimmy Mote as deacon Nov. 4. Shown are his son, Andrew; wife, Cynthia; Mote; and pastor Bruce McKenzie.

**UTICA CHURCH, UTICA** licensed Christopher "Tiny" Hudson to the gospel ministry Oct. 21. Hudson was called to Crossroads Church in Pelahatchie as student leader. Shown are Felicia Hudson, Hudson, and pastor Rocky Henriques.



**NEW HOPE CHURCH, FOXWORTH,** recently recognized the ones that had perfect attendance in Sunday School for the church year 2011-2012. Pictured are B. B. Stringer - 57 years, Dillon Smith - 8 years, Kristie Smith - 15 years, Nancy Thomas - 26 years, Rev. Tim Parker - Pastor, Sherrell Magee - 31 years and Jimmy Thomas - 43 years.

## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either email, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: [baptistrecord@mbcb.org](mailto:baptistrecord@mbcb.org).



# Miss. senators help block controversial treaty ratification

**WASHINGTON (BP and local reports)** — The U.S. Senate fell short Dec. 4 in its bid to ratify a United Nations treaty that critics charged could subvert parental authority and American sovereignty, as well as expand abortions.

Senators voted 61-38 in favor of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (CRPD) but failed to achieve the two-thirds majority required in the Senate to approve a treaty.

The CRPD's foes had expressed hope they had the votes to prevent ratification, but they acknowledged senators were under intense pressure to support the controversial treaty.

The treaty's opponents applauded its failure. "I'm delighted that this ignominious treaty has been sent to the ash heap of history where it belongs and that even a lame-duck Senate understood the intrusions upon American sovereignty that were unacceptable," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

The New York Times reported that Mississippi Republican Thad Cochran, a Southern Baptist, voted yes at the beginning of the roll call vote and then switched his vote to no. Mississippi's junior senator, Republican Roger Wicker, also a Southern Baptist, voted against the treaty.

Michael Smith, president of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) in Purcellville, Va., described the treaty's defeat in an email to supporters as "a great victory for parental rights, homeschool freedom, and children with special needs."

Senate ratification would have meant the treaty would become law under the U.S. Constitution, supersede state laws, and be considered binding in the courts, HSLDA warned before the vote.

HSLDA, which led opposition to the treaty, listed the following among its concerns with the treaty in a recent letter to senators endorsed by Land and 39 other pro-family and conservative leaders:

■ An article in the treaty making the "best interests

of the child" a "primary consideration" could usurp the "traditional fundamental right of parents to direct the education and upbringing" of a special needs child.

■ A 1989 New Zealand law that is considered to comply with the CRPD permits the secretary of Education to require a disabled child to attend a government-operated school if he thinks it best for the student, implying the same thing could happen in the United States.

■ The U.S. could surrender its sovereignty to a committee, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, established by the treaty.

The treaty's inclusion of the term "reproductive health," sometimes a euphemism for abortion rights, drew concern as well. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee failed to allay those concerns when it defeated an amendment that sought to clarify that "reproductive health" does not include abortion.

John Kerry, D-Mass., who promoted the treaty as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, rejected the charges leveled by its foes. He denied the CRPD would either usurp American law or change abortion policy.

Kerry also said the committee established by the treaty has "very, very limited powers."

The treaty's foes acknowledged the need to expand protections for disabled people in developing countries, but said the federal Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) already provides such safeguards in this country.

All of the Senate's 51 Democrats, as well as the chamber's two independents, voted for the treaty's ratification. Eight Republicans joined them.

President Obama signed the CRPD in 2009, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved it in a 13-6 vote in July of this year.

Three Republicans joined the 10 Democrats on the panel in supporting the treaty at that time.



U.S. Supreme Court Building, Washington, D.C.

## U.S. Supreme Court agrees to hear crucial cases on same sex marriage

**WASHINGTON (BP)** — The U.S. Supreme Court on Dec. 7 agreed to take up two cases that could either lead to the legalization of same sex marriage nationwide or affirm the rights of legislators and voters to protect traditional marriage.

The court's action means that sometime next year, perhaps in March, the court will hear oral arguments in the cases and hand down a decision by the end of June.

The justices will consider the constitutionality of two laws. One is the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which defines marriage for federal purposes as being between a man and a woman. The other is California Proposition 8, a voter-approved constitutional amendment which defines marriage as between one man and one woman.

Together, the cases pose a question at the core of the marriage debate: Under the U.S. Constitution, can the federal government and the various states define marriage in the traditional sense, thus prohibiting the recognition of same sex marriage and other non-traditional unions?

Supporters of gay marriage say DOMA and Prop 8 violate the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause. Nine states recognize same sex marriage, and 30 have constitutional amendments defining marriage as between one man and one woman. The other 11 states define marriage in statutes as between a man and a woman. Mississippi has a constitutional amendment.

If the Supreme Court strikes

"Arguing this case before the Supreme Court finally gives us a chance at a fair hearing, something that hasn't been afforded to the people since we began this fight. We are delighted that the nation's highest court will decide whether to uphold the will of more than seven million Californians who voted to preserve the unique definition of marriage as only between one man and one woman."

**Andy Pugno**

general counsel for  
California's  
ProtectMarriage.com

down California Prop 8, then the 41 states that don't recognize same sex marriage could be forced to do so. If it overturns DOMA, then the federal government will be forced to recognize the same sex marriages of the nine states where it's legal, something it currently does not.

Lower courts struck down DOMA and Prop 8 in the cases at issue. California voters passed Prop 8 in 2008 by a margin of 52%-48%. The amendment reads, "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California." It reversed a California Supreme Court rul-

ing that had legalized same sex marriage.

"Every one of the numerous legal steps we have taken for the past four years has been in anticipation of this moment," Andy Pugno, general counsel for California's ProtectMarriage.com, said in a statement. ProtectMarriage.com is the organization behind Prop 8.

"Arguing this case before the Supreme Court finally gives us a chance at a fair hearing, something that hasn't been afforded to the people since we began this fight. We are delighted that the nation's highest court will decide whether to uphold the will of more than seven million Californians who voted to preserve the unique definition of marriage as only between one man and one woman."

The Defense of Marriage Act was passed by Congress in 1996 and signed by President Bill Clinton.

"Marriage between a man and a woman is a universal good that diverse cultures and faiths have honored throughout the history of Western Civilization," Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) attorney Jim Campbell said in a statement. ADF supports DOMA and Prop 8.

"Marriage expresses the truth that men and women bring distinct, irreplaceable gifts to family life. The ProtectMarriage.com legal team looks forward to advocating before the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of the people's right to preserve this fundamental building block of civilization," Campbell said.

## Just for the Record



**COLLEGE HILL HEIGHTS CHURCH, OXFORD**, held an RA and GA Recognition Service Oct. 21.



**FAIRVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH, COLUMBUS**, volunteers from InTouch, Hands and Feet, and Clown Ministries provided entertainment for the children at the Ronald McDonald House in Memphis, Tennessee. These volunteers also prepared a meal and led a chapel service for the families.

The children of **BRANCH CHURCH, MORTON**, attended camp at Roosevelt State Park for missions. They fed those coming every week for food at the Carlisle Crisis Center.



**UTICA CHURCH, UTICA**, recently recognized Margaret Harrison and Edna Earl Cessna for a total of 115 years of teaching children in Sunday School - Harrison with 60 years and Cessna with 55 years. They were honored with plaques, corsages, and gift certificated, presented by Ken Mitchell. Shown are Mitchell, Harrison, Cessna, and pastor Rocky Henriques.



**FAIRFIELD CHURCH, MOSELLE**, recently held a baby dedication. Shown are the participants.



**PLEASANT HILL CHURCH, COLUMBUS**, ordained and licensed David M. Chism to the ministry Nov. 11. Shown are Chism, his wife Lana, Dan Robertson, Sue Myers, pastor Bill Hurt, Terry Veazey, and Chuck Eavenson.

**SALEM CHURCH, LAKE**, broke ground on their new sanctuary Oct. 21. The new facility will more than double the size of their present building.





## Just for the Record

**FIRST CHURCH, HICKORY FLAT**, hosted a ladies' luncheon to promote state missions. Shown with the ladies of the church are guest speakers Kay Cassibry and Maria Teel.



**WEST DREW CHURCH, DREW**, recently ordained Tony Champion and A.W. Parks as deacons. Shown are John Champion, Champion, Parks, and pastor Rick Milan.

**ROCK BLUFF CHURCH, RANKIN ASSOCIATION**, donated a minibus to LifeSpring Church, Morton. LifeSpring is a church plant, sponsored through the Mississippi Baptist Convention through the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering. Shown are Donne Stuart, pastor; Durwood Anderson; and Scott Mangum and Bob Phillipson, co-pastors at LifeSpring.



### In other Church News:

► The adult choir of **Enon Church, Grenada**, is presenting the cantata, *Born to You This Day* Dec. 16, 11 a.m., and the student choir will present the cantata, *Praise to the King* at 6 p.m.



**CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, sponsored a stewardship emphasis during November. Evangelist Ronnie Cottingham was in charge of the worship service the last Sunday of the month. The service also included a harvest supper and new year's budget presentation. Shown are pastor Hal Hatten and Cottingham.



The Children in Action of **CONCORD CHURCH, BENTON-TIPPAH ASSOCIATION**, participated in the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering by giving an offering for missions in October.



A certificate of association membership was presented to **THE BEGINNINGS CHURCH, PEARL RIVER ASSOCIATION**, at the association's fall meeting at Bethel Church. Shown are Lesa Marshall, Shannon Marshall, Ed King, and Carl Myers.

## Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

*"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)*

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

# Optimism for bipartisan immigration reform on the rise

WASHINGTON (BP) — Advocates for comprehensive reform of the United States immigration system expressed new optimism at recent events in Washington, and urged Congress and the White House to work together quickly before the window of opportunity closes.

There is a "fairly narrow window," Southern Baptist ethicist Richard Land said Dec. 5 at a summit sponsored by Human Rights First. Advocates have until early 2014, when congressional primaries begin, "to get this done before election politics begins to intrude its ugly head again into this issue," he said.



LAND

"The country is hungry for seeing bipartisan agreement in this town, and I think this is an issue where we can achieve it, and we need to do so while we still have this moment," said Land, president of Southern Baptists' Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

On the same panel, nine-term Congressman Zoe Lofgren (D.-Ca.) told the audience, "I do think we have the first real opportunity since I've been a member of Congress... and I'd like to have it done by Easter."

Immigration is "a mess from top to bottom, and we need top-to-bottom reform," she said. "I think we have a real opportunity at this point to do top-to-bottom immigration reform."

The optimism comes more than five years after the last push for immigration reform failed despite the efforts of then-President George W. Bush. The November election,

which reform advocates said demonstrated the increased voting power of Hispanics, provides a significant reason for legislative movement in addressing a long-standing problem that has resulted in about 11 million illegal, or undocumented, immigrants in this country.

The calls in the country's capital for a new push to enact reform came amid other developments the same week that provided hope for success:

■ Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) said Dec. 5 he is "really hopeful we can deal with the issue of immigration holistically" in the next two years "in a comprehensive package of bills," Politico reported.

■ Former President George W. Bush, in a Dec. 4 speech in Dallas, called for "a benevolent spirit" in addressing immigration, according to The Dallas Morning News. "America can be a lawful society and a welcoming society at the same time," said Bush, who has expressed regret he didn't push for immigration reform before Social Security reform after winning the 2004 election.

■ A new study based on U.S. Census Bureau data through early 2011 confirmed illegal immigration has experienced a sustained decline in recent years and there is no net migration from Mexico any longer, the Associated Press reported Dec. 6. The survey showed 11.1 million illegal immigrants in the country, virtually the same as in 2009.

At the Human Rights First panel discussion, Thomas (Mac) McLarty, former chief of staff for President Bill Clinton, pointed to three factors that have changed in recent

years on the issue: border protection is much more serious and efficient; the latest election changed the political landscape, producing a "wake-up call" for Republicans especially; and Mexico's economy has improved.

McLarty, co-chairman of a 2009 task force on immigration for the Council on Foreign Relations, also expressed optimism about a new reform effort. "It still has some tough politics to it, no question about that," he said.

Land told summit participants President Obama and leaders from both parties in Congress must provide real leadership "to construct a conscious coalition of the middle, of the moderate conservatives in the Republican Party and the moderate progressives in the Democratic Party who will wall off the radicals on the right and the radicals on the left who will try to sabotage this."

"[I]t's going to take a disciplined coalition of the middle, which I think represents at least two-thirds of the country, in terms of their attitudes on this issue, to get this done," he said.

Republicans told reporters at a Dec. 4 news conference their party needed to change tactics. Conservatives and Republicans "have been talking to the wrong crowd; we've been worried about the wrong people; we've been pandering in some cases to a small minority of our party," said Mark Shurtleff, Utah's attorney general.

Brad Bailey, a Houston businessman and co-founder of the Texas Immigration Solution, said, "[T]he vocal minority has hijacked this issue, and we need to fight back."

At the news conference, Hispanic evangelical leaders said immigration is a biblical, moral issue but acknowledged politics

is involved. They pointed to the Republicans' need to change if they hope to gain votes among Hispanics.

Exit polling indicated only 27% of Hispanics voted for GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney, who had called for self-deportation during the primaries. Pollsters said the Hispanic vote moved four states — Colorado, Florida, Nevada, and New Mexico — into the Democratic column, said Luis Cortes, president of Esperanza.

The Hispanic evangelical church is conservative, but the Hispanic vote "moved away from social values to family values" in the latest election, Cortes told reporters. "One of every five Latinos knows someone who has already been deported, and they're all members of our family, our extended family. So we voted against self-deportation."

The Hispanic electorate is expected to double by 2030, and Texas and Arizona likely would be the next states to switch party columns as a result, Cortes said. "So at the end of the day, what's in it for the Republican Party is survival," he said.

Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, said the GOP has an opportunity to make gains if it acts soon on immigration reform.

"If they pass this in 2013, [the Republicans] will have three years to redeem the narrative" among Hispanics, Rodriguez told reporters. "If they wait 'til the end of the game, it could be difficult next time around."

Both Cortes and Rodriguez also said Obama must show his commitment to reform. "The president promised the first-term immigration reform. It did not happen," Rodriguez

said.

The Obama administration announced in June an executive action that will immediately permit illegal immigrants who came to the United States as children to apply to be free from the threat of deportation and to seek authorization to work.

"There are skeptics in the Hispanic community saying, 'Was that an act of political expediency or was he really committed to that as it pertains to a moral imperative?' This is his time to prove that wasn't an act of political expediency but rather he is wholeheartedly committed," Rodriguez said. "So what's the president's role? He must be the moral and the national spokesperson for comprehensive immigration reform."

The Dec. 4 news conference, featuring religious and business leaders as well as law enforcement officials, came on the first day of a two-day strategy session attended by more than 250 people.

Land and others made visits to congressional offices seeking support for reform legislation.

The coalition, organized by the National Immigration Forum, cited three consensus points:

■ Recognition of the need for border security and safety in communities.

■ Establishment of a just pathway to legal status and citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

■ Modernization of the immigration laws.

On Nov. 13, Land joined nine other leaders of the Evangelical Immigration Table in asking Obama and the leaders of the Senate and House of Representatives to meet with them in early 2013 to discuss a bipartisan solution to the controversial issue.

## Letters to the Editor

Unsigned letters will not be printed. Multi-copy and form letters will not be printed.

Each correspondent must include a home address and home telephone number for verification. Cell phone numbers are not acceptable. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing. Correspondents must refrain from personal attacks, offensive characterizations, and political partisanship. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

There is no guarantee that an individual's letter will be published. No more than one letter from an individual will be published during a six-month period.

When in the judgment of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with that issue will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.



## CONTACT PROVIDERS

Editor:

If your church or religious organization has not already received notice, you will soon be informed that effective your next plan date (as soon as January 1, 2013), your health insurance plan will include coverage of the "morning after pill." This drug is considered an abortifacient and has never been included in your policies before. Interestingly the coverage is only available to minors.

Many of us have been living under the impression that there will be special considerations in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) for our institutions of faith. The problem is that the President and the Health and Human Services Secretary have retained the right to define what is a "religious entity." The ACA is providing some short term relief for certain religious groups to prepare for the eventuality of their en-

forcement, but this only lasts until August 1, 2013. Even so, healthcare insurance providers in Mississippi have determined that they will not provide this accommodation for the exempted entities. They will provide just one plan for everyone — Bible colleges, seminaries, and churches included. Your religious convictions are not relevant; this is their business decision.

Please consider contacting your health care provider immediately. There are only days until the end of the year when this is scheduled to take effect. This is a decision they can reverse. It is up to concerned men and women of faith to encourage them to change their minds.

Dave Davis  
Jackson

## HAPPY FOR PASTOR

Editor:

I am very happy that the Ira-

nian pastor, Youcef Nadarkhani, was freed after 1,000 days in a prison for being a Christian. It is wonderful that God answered the fervent prayers of many who prayed for this man's release. I am also grateful that this pastor's plight was chronicled in The Baptist Record.

Jimmy Williamson  
Kosciusko

## THE REAL GIFT

Editor:

My life is great, but I may not think so. Jesus is who makes my life great. Snowmen and presents are nice but it's all about my Savior, Jesus. He gave us Christmas. One way to think of it is Santa is God and he carries Jesus, the present. Jesus came to us and saved us. Jesus is the real gift. We need nothing but Jesus.

Lillian Huss, age eight  
Sebastopol





**ARMED STUGGLE CONTINUES** — In this file photo from several years ago, Hamas militants in Gaza join an march after parliamentary elections in the controversial territory adjoining Israel. (BP photo courtesy of Isma' Mohamad/UPI)

## Latest Gaza/Israel conflict yields no easy answers for either side

**BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)** — "Draw anything you want to draw," a teacher in Gaza told her class of small children. After a few minutes a little girl brought a picture of a man without legs lying in the street. She said she had seen him just outside her home.

In Israel, shell-shocked victims of a bus bombing lay outside a tangled mass of seats and shattered glass, panicked and waiting for medical treatment.

In both Gaza and Israel, life is marked by the ravages of war. "Those who want no part of the bombings — either from Gaza to Israel or from Israel to Gaza — are caught between the bombs of both," said Stephen Johnson, an Alabamian who serves as a Christian worker among Palestinians.

"The long-term psychological effect is impossible to gauge, but continued warfare is training up another generation of enemies," he said.

In recent rocket exchanges stopped by a Nov. 21 ceasefire, more than 150 Palestinians and six Israelis died. Israel said its military action, called Operation Pillar of Defense, was in response to 100 rockets fired from Gaza into Israel during peacetime.

In the midst of a tenuous ceasefire, Christian workers wait to see what will happen in the yearning for true peace.

Ben Martin, an Alabamian who serves as a Christian worker among Jews, said, "The attitude in Israel right now is that ...the world doesn't understand what happened and that when they retaliate in response to rockets from Gaza, they are looked down on by the world."

Meanwhile, Israelis constantly anticipate that things could change. "They try not to let terrorists disrupt their life," Martin said, "but when the sirens go off you have mere moments to get into a bomb shelter. In Tel Aviv

you have a minute and a half. In Sderot (just outside Gaza) you have 15 seconds. One hundred missiles had already been fired into Israel before (Operation Pillar of Defense) ever started."

Meanwhile, Gaza is reeling from what Johnson called the "worst bombardment" it has ever experienced. "Destruction is widespread," he said. "The stakes get a little higher each time."

Many say they fear the ceasefire won't last. The tension is a chronic situation, Johnson and Martin agreed. What will stop it?

"Gaza has got to get some hope that their lives can get better," Johnson said. The more hopeless they are, "the more radicalized they become and the more difficult they are to reach with the Gospel," he said.

Johnson said he firmly believes many will eventually find their hope in Jesus Christ. "We are sharing our lives and His love, so that when the time comes, they will know the source of all hope."

People on both sides express gratefulness when Johnson, Martin and others choose to stay with them when the bombs are headed their way, Johnson said. "For those [Christian workers] on the field who are new, it is a challenging time of reconsidering their call to the field. It's a fairly sobering experience. We are blessed to know that our new workers counted the cost and chose to stay in spite of difficult circumstances."

Martin urged Baptists to be in prayer, especially for them not to pick a side. "This is not like a football game where we choose a side we're for. This is a situation where we have to be for both of these people groups and for their salvation. This is about choosing the Lord's work."

Botrus Mansour, an Arab Israeli believer who serves as director of Nazareth Baptist School,

said Christians in the region need special prayer because they teeter on the line of whether to use the strife as an open opportunity to share the Gospel or to tuck and run and take the light with them.

One Christian in Gaza died of a heart attack after rockets struck houses near his, and the small Christian community in Gaza — about 1,500 people, with fewer than 100 Baptists — struggles amid overwhelming need, Mansour said.

The Christian community in Israel has a lot to face as well, Mansour said. "Times of tension and conflict create an opportunity for the Baptist churches to serve the people through sharing the Gospel and offering relief services, but they also cause [enough] frustration for some Baptists to consider leaving the country [Israel]."

"The future looks pessimistic without peacemakers. This will cause more emigration of Christians from the Holy Land."

A Southern Baptist representative identified as Herb, who is living in Israel, said he hopes that Baptist churches there will continue "to be agents of peace in the midst of the situation."

"We continue to pray for both groups [Palestinians and Israelis] — that God will strengthen those who want true peace," he said.

Herb said he hopes people won't stop coming to Israel. "Sometimes when flare-ups like this happen, people stop coming. We feel like people should continue to come. We feel very secure."

Herb said he doesn't see anything changing in Baptist work in Israel anytime soon, noting, "We are in it for the long haul. Baptists have been in Israel since 1911 and we are committed to carrying on."

*Editor's note: Some names in this story have been changed for security reasons.*

## First person: We as Christians should start playing offense

By Russell D. Moore  
Correspondent

Flipping through magazines on an airplane the other day, I found myself sighing with irritation. An advertisement for Budweiser was tagged with the headline, "Silent Nights are Overrated." A few minutes later, in a second magazine, I came across an ad for a high-end outdoor grill, which read, "Who says it's better to give than to receive?"

My first reaction was one that I've critiqued in others, to take some sort of personal, or at least tribal, offense: "Would they advertise in Turkey during Ramadan with the line, 'Fasting is Overrated'?" or by asking in India, "Who says everything is one with the universe?"

I was missing the point — and that matters.

Every year about this time, there's a lot of hubbub about a so-called "War on Christmas." In some instances, there are legitimate questions of religious liberty involved and complicated church/state questions that we ought to be concerned about. More commonly, though, the outrage is directed toward the commercial marketplace, for replacing "Merry Christmas" with "Happy Holidays" and so on.

As Christians, we ought to recognize that a militant pull toward what Richard John Neuhaus called a "naked public square" is bad for people of any and all religious traditions, but there's a difference between, for instance, standing against a school system penalizing a child for writing "Merry Christmas" on her "holiday card," and the kind of huffing and puffing we do when commercial marketers don't "get" our Christian commitments.

I should have thought about the fact that the advertising agencies behind this beer company and this grill corporation are trying to sell products, not to offend constituencies. Taking shots at any group's religious beliefs isn't good economics, and that's just the point. I'm willing to bet whoever dreamed up these ad campaigns didn't "get" at all that they might be making fun of Jesus Christ.

Madison Avenue probably didn't trace through that the song, "Silent Night," is about the holy awe of the dawning Incarnation in Bethlehem. To them, it's just a Christmas song, part of the background music in our culture this time of year. Saying it's overrated probably didn't feel any more insensitive to these

copywriters than making a joke about, say, decking the halls or reindeer games or Heat Miser and Cold Miser."

They probably never thought about the fact that the statement, "It is better to give than to receive," is a quotation from Jesus (Acts 20:35). To them, it probably just seems like a Benjamin Franklin-style aphorism. It's the same kind of thing that happens when someone says "scarlet letter" without recognizing Hawthorne, or "to be or not to be" while not knowing the difference between Hamlet and Shrek.

We ought not to get outraged by all that, as though we were some protected class of victims. We ought to instead see the ways that our culture is less and less connected with the roots of basic knowledge about Christianity.

Many, especially in the culture-making wing of American life, see Christmas in the same way they see Hanukkah. They know about Menorahs and dreidels, but not about the Maccabean fight.

That ought not make us angry. It ought to instead give us an opportunity to understand how we look to our neighbors. They see us more in terms of our trivialities than in terms of the depths of meaning of Incarnation and blood atonement and the kingdom of Christ.

They know something about "Silent Night," just as they know something about "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer." What they don't recognize is the cosmos-shifting mystery of Immanuel as God with Us.

All that means is that we need to spend more time lovingly engaging our neighbors with the sort of news that shocks angels and redirects stargazers and knocks sheep-herders to the ground. That it seems increasingly strange is all the better — because it is strange. A Gospel safe enough to sell beer and barbecue is a Gospel too safe to make blessings flow, far as the curse is found.

Christmas, then, isn't about a fight for our right to party. It's a reminder that we, like every generation before us, live in a land of deep darkness (Isaiah 9:2). The darkness isn't overcome by sarcasm or personal offense or retaliatory insults. The light of Bethlehem shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not — cannot, will not — overcome it, and that's enough.

Moore, a Biloxi native, is dean of the school of theology at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.



MOORE

## SUPPORT

cont. from p. 1

Nigeria, and more than 20 other countries.

The other spokesmen emphasized the need for action from the United States government to help the persecuted. "I find it difficult to describe it as merely persecution. This is almost extinction," said Emmanuel Ogebe, a Nigerian Christian attorney, in describing the situation in his African nation.

During the past year, Nigerian churches have suffered 24 suicide bombings, making it the worst year of the past 30 years of persecution, Ogebe said. Christians in Nigeria are not accustomed to such persecution, he said during the webcast.

"Christians wear their Sunday best to go to church, and it turns out to be their funeral clothing," he said.

Nigeria has seen little support from the United States government, Ogebe said. Last Christmas, three cities were bombed by Boko Haram, a militant Islamic organization based in Nigeria. The U.S. State Department, however, said in its latest International Religious Freedom Report only one city was bombed, Ogebe said.

He believes this further demonstrates the United States' desire not to label the bombings as terrorist attacks. Part of his belief is based on the fact the State Department refuses to label Boko Haram

as a terrorist group.

U.S. President Barack Obama and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton must be willing to take action to help prevent the persecution of Christians, said Tom Farr, director of the Religious Freedom Project at the Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs on the Georgetown University campus in Washington, D.C.

Clinton has announced her intention to leave her post, and Obama has not named a successor.

Also, Congress should deal with the issue as a bipartisan body, but while many are willing to agree, few are willing to act, Farr said. "I've been hearing 'amens' for 14 years, but I haven't seen any policies," Farr said.

The number of Christians in Iran has risen to anywhere between one and three million, said Hormoz Shariat, founder of Iran Alive Ministries. Meanwhile, the radical Islamic government in that Middle East country has begun cracking down on Christians in a way it has not done before, he said.

"The persecution is a result of God working and people responding," Shariat said during the webcast.

Shariat recounted the story of a 17-year-old boy who was imprisoned for his Christian faith. He was beaten, his leg broken, and the fingers on his right hand shattered. In addition, his educational records were expunged and he was dismissed from his university.

Yet at the end of the teenager's imprisonment, the guard in charge of his torture asked the young man to continue to share the Gospel with him so he could become a Christian, Shariat said.

Iranians are eager to hear the Gospel of Jesus, because they see so many flaws in their own Islamic faith, Shariat said. The Christian movement in Iran should not be pitied, he said. Christians should be encouraged to take hold of their opportunity to make Iran a new country, he told the audience.

American Christians don't know enough about the persecution of their brothers and sisters abroad, said Todd Nettleton, VOM's director of media development. Some Christians are increasing their awareness of the plight abroad but many more are still uneducated on the topic, he said.

"There are a lot of Christians who close the last chapter of Acts and think that is where the persecution stopped," Nettleton said.

Tony Perkins and Nettleton urged Christians throughout America to educate themselves about the persecution of Christians so they would be able to pray effectively. They also urged them to send Bibles and letters for the persecuted and sign petitions calling for the release of imprisoned Christians.

"There are people losing their lives, and we are doing nothing about it," Perkins said.

## FRUGE

cont. from p. 2

regardless of the story (Psalm 34:18).

**I learned to accept that while sin may cause evil, nothing my baby did was sinful.** Neither the man of John 9 nor his parents had caused his blindness, although he was blind as a consequence of the Fall of Adam and Eve. This difference is so crucial! No one grieves the effects of sin for their children more than God the Father. Yet He worked through the Fall to transform us into His daughters and heirs of the promise (Romans 8:17).

For me, that means I can weep guilt-free with my daughter when she cries because of her differences. It means I can confidently teach her that God is powerful enough to take any effect of the Fall and display His glorious work through it (John 9:3).

**I learned the importance of depending entirely on God's strength.** Shortly after I delivered my daughter, I received a sweet

note from a wise woman. She told me she would be praying for me as I discovered God's strength for my journey. I simply couldn't phrase it any better.

Throughout the pregnancy my husband read Psalm 91 out loud to me. I started to visualize myself as a wounded and weak soldier, too tired to go on and ready for death but suddenly finding myself completely covered under God's impenetrable shelter.

Nothing about me had changed. I was still weak and ready to die. The only thing that had changed was that Someone was protecting me from the continual onslaught. I wasn't being strong at all. I knew that for sure. Instead, I was learning to discover just how powerful God's strength is.

When I realized how limited my strength was, I was able to fully learn what it means to hide in the cleft of the rock.

There's no way I could have known in college the emotional and spiritual battle that choosing life would entail, but I'm incredibly thankful that God is sovereign and helped strengthen me for

the challenge, years before I knew I needed it.

We had a difficult pregnancy that entailed bi-weekly ultrasounds, lots of blood work, prayers, and tears. After 37 weeks, our beautiful, healthy daughter was born. She is still missing two limbs, but her arm isn't atrophied at all. The children's hospital has been correcting her foot since she was four weeks old, and she just got her first prosthetic leg!

She's also unbelievably cute and smart with eyes as blue as the ocean.

I know we still have trials ahead of us. Eventually she will realize she's different and will weep because of it. My prayer is that she will persevere because of the same truths I have come to embrace.

Our fallen world hurts, but God is more powerful and is a shelter like no other.

*Fruge is pursuing a Ph.D. in systematic theology at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth. Follow her family's journey on their blog, [www.babyevecatherine.com](http://www.babyevecatherine.com). Her commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.*

## BIBL i O C i P H E R

QCON QXDD JU TW XE NCU HWDURE

TOJ, OET XE NCU TOJ WA NCU AUOHN

WA NCU DWLT?

CWHUO EXEU: AXIU

Clue: N = T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John Four Thirty-four

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

[www.lambsbooklist.com](http://www.lambsbooklist.com)

JOIN "THE LIST"  
A list of Christian Businesses  
and Professionals  
Advertising Their Business

## MS POSITIONS

MORRISON CHAPEL BAPTIST CHURCH, CLEVELAND, IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME YOUTH/ASSOCIATE PASTOR. Resumes may be sent to Personnel Committee, 196 Morrison Chapel Road, Cleveland, MS 38732. Job description is available.

THE SCOTT COUNTY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE ASSOCIATION MISSIONS DIRECTOR POSITION. Please mail resumes to: SCBA: AMD Search Committee, 518 Airport Road, Forest, MS 39074. For further inquiries, contact Bro. Paul Smith 601-214-5499.

WEBSTER COUNTY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION CURRENTLY HAS AN OPENING FOR ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS DIRECTOR. Please send resumes to Rev. Wade Stevens, PO Box 260, Mathiston, MS 39752, or email [mathistonbcp@bellsouth.net](mailto:mathistonbcp@bellsouth.net).

CD or IRA  
Maturing?

7.00%  
First Year  
GUARANTEED  
Includes First Year Bonus

Learn the Safe & Secure Way  
to Earn Stock Market Linked  
Returns, Without Market Risk  
to Your Principal

L.D. O'Mire

Financial Services  
1-800-844-3254

## CLASSIFIEDS

FULL-TIME SENIOR PASTOR: Beech Haven Baptist Church of Athens, GA is seeking an ordained Baptist pastor. If you meet the criteria stated at [www.beechhaven.org/srpastor](http://www.beechhaven.org/srpastor) and wish to apply, send a resume and cover letter by 1/11/2013 describing why you want to be considered as a candidate ([bhbcpc@gmail.com](mailto:bhbcpc@gmail.com)).

DO YOU NEED A CHURCH PIANIST? Try our piano CDs for churches to sing by! Hymns, Gospel, Christmas, Choruses. Call Worship Service Resources 1-877-977-6800. FREE DEMO! [www.wsrpianos.com](http://www.wsrpianos.com) or [www.wsrpianos.com](http://www.wsrpianos.com).

HEIDELBERG STAINED GLASS: Meridian. Design, fabrication, repair. Fax illustrations to 601-483-7958 or call 800-368-2705.

CHURCH PEW UPHOLSTERY, FREE ESTIMATES. Davis Upholstery, Quitman, Miss., phone 601-776-6617.

GATLINBURG RENTALS: Cabin \$90/night and Condo \$70/night. Contact: 832-922-0401 or E-mail: [pdw4760@att.net](mailto:pdw4760@att.net) for information and booking.

GET THE BEST RATES ON: Health Insurance and Medicare Supplements. Call 1-800-541-8196 or visit [www.TurnerInsuranceOnline.com](http://www.TurnerInsuranceOnline.com)

WANT A GOOD GROUP OF CHRISTIAN WOMEN TO ENTERTAIN AT YOUR NEXT SENIOR CITIZENS GROUP? Call the Raggedy Rags, a washtub band. We sing, tell jokes, and play instruments. Call us at 601-857-0736.

SEBREN'S SIDING [www.sebrenhomesimprovement.com](http://www.sebrenhomesimprovement.com). Christian owned Don & Rita Sebre. 601-992-2092. All home improvements, siding, energy efficient windows, metal & shingle roofs, screen & sunrooms, patio covers, decks, room additions, kitchen & bath upgrades.

STAINED GLASSWORKS, INC., serving MS & AL since 1992. Call 800-605-2970

GET AWAY AT BETSY'S LIL' CABINS call for a brochure 601-940-6841.

STAINED GLASS: new windows and repairs. Hopper Stained Glass, Jackson, 601-502-0202.



## Deciding on Discipline • Hosea 8:1-3, 7-10; 9:7-8; 10:10-12

In the post modern world in which we live, the idea of discipline carries with it both positive and negative feelings. As we study this week in Hosea we must first note that God's idea of discipline carries with it the total weight of His love for His people. Most people see discipline through the eyes of punishment, but God sees discipline through the eyes of His redemptive purpose. Second, it must be noted that because of God's righteousness, sin carries with it consequences. As a child I remember what happened when I disobeyed my parents. I had to endure the punishment I deserved, but never did I ever believe my parents did not love me. I knew they loved me because they showed me by their actions every day. Through Hosea we see a wonderful picture of our redemptive God, using His redemptive discipline to move His people toward spiritual maturity.

### Check Your Relationship (Hosea 8:1-3)

In chapters 8-10 of Hosea, God is declaring to His people that they must face severe discipline for their sin against Him. Remember that Israel's sin was that they worshipped God with their lips but rejected Him through the evidence of their lifestyles. They gave God lip service on the Sabbath but lived however they wanted to

the rest of the time. Their worship of Him had no effect on the way they lived. If our relationship with God does not have an effect on how we live, then there is evidence that the relationship is non-existent. In verses four through six of chapter eight we see strong evidence of their broken relationship with God. They have set their own kings in place to rule over them and they have set up idols to worship instead of worshipping the one true God.

### You Reap What You Sow (Hosea 8:7-10)

The saying "you reap what you sow" is one with which we are all familiar. We are familiar with it, but I am

not sure we believe it. In verse seven God declares to His people that they have sown the seed of unfaithfulness and now they will face His wrath. Again we see how God can and will use His creation to discipline His children. They will sow their seeds of grain but experience no crop, and if they do



### Explore the Bible

with Huey Dedmon

have a crop, it will be taken away by their enemies. There are many times when God will allow us to experience temporal consequences because of our sin against Him.

### Heed a Warning When You Hear It! (Hosea 9:7-8)

In chapter nine Hosea warns the people of the coming exile. In verse three we see the reference of returning to the captive lifestyle they experienced in Egypt. In verse seven Hosea tells them the day of punishment has come and they need to recognize

it. The people had ignored the genuine prophets of God and had accepted the words of the false prophets. They had

called God's prophets "fool" and "insane." Hosea used their own words to point out their blatant rejection of God and His prophets. They had become so corrupt that they would rather get rid of God's prophets than listen to them. They had reached a point of hostility toward God. Through

Hosea, God was giving them fair warning of His coming redemptive discipline!

### Realize What Time It Is (Hosea 10:10-12)

One of the aspects of God's redemptive discipline is that when a person or a group of people repent of their sin and ask for His forgiveness, He begins their restoration. Hosea reminds the people that the only way to mend their broken relationship with God is to return to faithfulness to Him. They will endure His wrath for a season, but in chapter 10, verse twelve, Hosea exhorts the people to "sow righteousness for yourselves" and their reward will be that they will "reap faithful love." Their past has been filled with deeds of wickedness and unfaithfulness, and because of that, they have reaped wickedness and unfaithfulness. They will not experience the blessings of God again until they realize it is time to return to Him.

God's plan was and still is to use redemptive discipline in our lives to keep us on His path. We need to be thankful that God cares about His children and does desire for us to live faithfully to and for Him.

Dedmon is Associate Pastor for Education/Outreach at Brandon Church, Brandon.

## Yahweh Our Righteousness • Jeremiah 23:5-6; Romans 3:1-26; 10:1-13

Picture a Bible in your hand. Better yet, pick up YOUR Bible and open it to the first chapter of the gospel of Matthew. You now have the Old Testament in your left hand and the New Testament in your right hand. Next, on top of those pages of priceless scripture, visualize one huge billboard with a red arrow pointing from your left to your right. The Old Testament is one giant, blood red, prophetic arrow pointing to the coming of the Messiah in the New Testament. Even the pagan wise men understood this truth! They followed that special star all the way to the Savior. They brought gifts of worship and bowed before the One born King of the Jews. Why did Jesus have to come? In His own words to John the Baptist at His baptism in Matthew 3:15 Jesus said, "...to fulfill all righteousness."

To quote my pastor, Dr. Kevin Jones: "People, we are all messed up." At my church, we have even printed tee shirts to remind ourselves of this truth. We are not righteous. We need cleansing. We cannot become righteous on our own. We can be made clean and righteous only by the shed blood of Jesus. God drew this picture for us throughout the Old Testament writings. Then, Jesus was born. God became us and came to us. He made a way for us to be seen as righteous.

In Romans 3, Paul paints a dark picture for us with these words: "There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks after God." The fine print next to these verses reveals that Paul (the Holy Spirit-inspired Old Testament scholar) is quoting David, the Holy Spirit-inspired writer of Psalm 14. The Old is explained clearly and fulfilled completely in The New.

We cannot comprehend our need for Jesus apart from an understanding of this week's name for God: Yahweh Our Righteousness. Comparing ourselves to anyone or anything other than God's standard for righteousness is sub-standard and unacceptable, bearing eternal consequences.

We have defined "YAHWEH" in the two previous lessons as we have come to understand Him as our God and our Father. We all know what "our" means in all three of these lesson titles. This week, we focus on Yahweh Our Righteousness. This

word covers several theme ideas: holiness; innocence; equity in character; justified, as in made right with the judge; morally clean; straight as a plumb line; true as a balanced, sharpened arrow; weighed correctly as with an honest set of scales; measured up to the set standard. The Standard Setter

is Yahweh. We do not set the standard. Folks live as though they are the standard setters. We believe that by our deeds, we

can be "good" people and be seen as righteous. Seeking our own righteousness apart from Christ achieves nothing. All have sinned, except Jesus. He alone lived a sinless life. He alone died a substitutionary death. He alone rose from the grave, defeating death. Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. We are yet sinners.

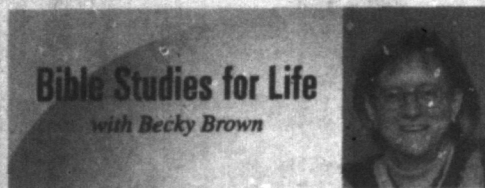
In Jeremiah 23:5-6, the coming of righteousness is promised. Through the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah, the LORD declares that this promise of righteousness

will be fulfilled through a Person coming from the line of David of the tribe of Judah. This passage is a direct prophecy of Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham, Son of God. Bethlehem, the City of David, would be the birthplace of Righteousness Himself approximately 600 years after Jeremiah wept over Jerusalem.

Paul tells us in Romans 3:22 that this righteousness is our own as we express our faith in Jesus Christ. We are justified (made right) by the gift of God's grace through the public sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. We have no works of our own to claim. Romans 10:9-10 explains this "word of faith" unequivocally. To be saved from our "messed up" selves, we must confess Jesus as Lord with our mouths and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead. True belief that comes from the heart results in our righteousness.

What better time of the year could there be than the Christmas season to ponder these wonder-filled names of God? Next week: Jesus Our Immanuel. Peace on earth! Good will! Good news! God is wearing baby shoes!

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.



### Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown

## FREE

cont. from p. 1

decision, and her lawyer expressed optimism about what the verdict could mean.

"I feel that with the development today, people who abuse blasphemy law will be discouraged. I hope this will bring a full stop to false blasphemy cases,"

Tahir Naveed Chaudhry said, according to The Times.

The chairman of the All Pakistan Ulama Council, a group of Muslim clerics who sought the girl's release, called the court decision a "milestone in the history of Pakistan," The Times said.

Reuters reported that the number of blasphemy cases have been rising in Pakistan, and although

the death sentence has never been carried out following conviction, "mobs often take the law into their own hands," resulting in 52 people being killed after being accused of blasphemy since 1990.

Though she was granted bail in September, Masih and her family have been in hiding because of fears for their safety, The Times reported. In an earlier report by

Open Doors News, Masih's lawyer said Masih and her family would remain in Pakistan once her legal ordeal was over.

They will try to settle back into something resembling a normal life rather than seeking asylum outside Pakistan, Chaudhry said.

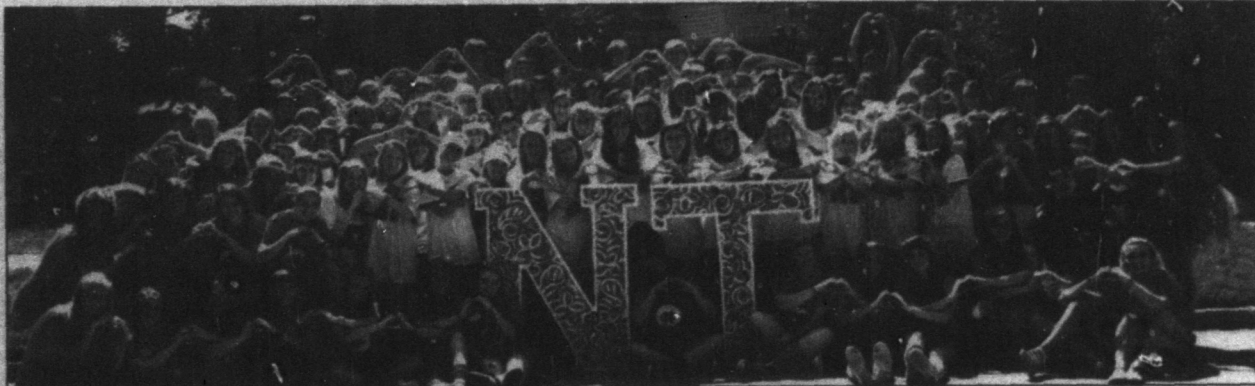
"This is the first case of its kind when a person charged under the strict blasphemy laws is exonerated

from the accusation," Chaudhry told Open Doors. "This case has also brought for the first time a debate on how these laws are misused to target innocent people."

Pakistan's president, Asif Ali Zardari, used Masih's case as an opportunity to insist the blasphemy law must not be used as a cover to settle personal scores, Open Doors reported.

## College News

The Nenamoosha Social Tribe at **MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE** recently raised over \$750.00 for the Center for Pregnancy Choices of Lawrence County. The CPC provided baby bottles and brochures about the ministry and the group placed coins and bills in the bottles. The CPC provides services to women and men that are in crisis pregnancies and support for anyone seeking help.



**WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** music students (left to right, seated) Brandon Hayes, a senior from Collins, and Emma Oberdick, a freshman from Wadsworth, Ill., with (left to right, standing) Kathy Vail, associate professor of music, and Connie Roberts, professor of music, took top honors individually at the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Conference and Competition for the Southern Region held at Louisiana State University November 8-10. The students were accompanied by Vail and coached by Roberts.

**WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** hosted a reception to celebrate the opening of A Juried Exhibition of Watercolors and Sculptures by the South Mississippi Art Association (SMAA) on November 29. Pictured is (left to right) Brooke Lane, who won First Place in Sculpture for Fantasy Ride, Wade Stephenson, who won First Place in Watercolor for Waiting on Another Load, and Dana Stratton, who won Best of the Show for Swan Song of Jasmine. The exhibit will be on display through December 14 in the Lucile Parker Gallery at WCU.



**BLUE MOUNTAIN COLLEGE** broke ground on its sports complex Dec. 3. Doing the honors were (left to right) Harold Wayne Hankins, chair of the BMC Board of Trustees; Barbara Childers McMillin, president; and Lavon Driskell, athletics director. The BMC sports complex will include baseball and softball fields, golf driving range, one-mile walking/running track, intramural soccer field, and sand volleyball court.

## Staff Changes



**FIRST CHURCH, VICKSBURG**, has called Josh Gee as minister of students & activities. Gee received his Bachelor's and Master's Degree of Arts in Christian Education from New Orleans Seminary. He has served churches in Greenwood, S. Carolina, and Metairie, La. He is shown with his wife Laura and son Jonathan.



**CALVARY CHURCH, SILVER CREEK**, has called Allen R. Spangler III as pastor. He graduated from William Carey University with a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Divinity from Southern Seminary. Shown are Spangler, his wife Keisha, and Nathan and Annie.